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Navy Chiefs Celebrate New Beginnings, Share Unique Tradition

BY VJOHNSON – APRIL 17, 2014

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Navy Medicine Training Support Center (NMTSC) chief petty officers conducted their third annual Navy white hat burial ceremony on board Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston in commemoration of the 121st Chief Petty Officer birthday.

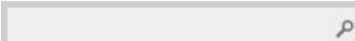


Navy Medicine Training Support Center chief petty officers conducted their third annual Navy white hat burial ceremony on board Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston in commemoration of the 121st Chief Petty Officer birthday. The white hat burial ceremony signifies transition from first class petty officer to chief petty officer and occurs during the final phase of an intense, six- to eight-week training period for selectees. Usually secluded, the ceremony was held to recognize and share chief petty officer and Navy traditions with the staff and students. (Photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist L.A. Shively)

NMTSC is the Navy component command providing organizational and operational support and control over Navy staff and students assigned to the Medical Education and Training Campus (METC) at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston and other medical programs in the San Antonio area.

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“Today we celebrate new beginnings while continuing to uphold our greatest of time-honored traditions and legacy preservation,” said Chief Hospital Corpsman Warren Johnson during his introductory remarks as master of ceremonies for the event.



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- November 2014
- September 2014
- August 2014
- July 2014
- June 2014
- May 2014
- April 2014
- March 2014
- February 2014
- January 2014
- December 2013
- November 2013
- October 2013

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- A LOOK BACK
- FEATURES
- I AM NAVY MEDICINE
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Chief Petty Officer Catherine Morales shovels dirt over a coffin lowered into the ground containing the white hats of first class petty officers from Navy Medicine Training Support Center promoted to chief petty officer in 2013. The white hat burial ceremony signifies transition from first class petty officer to chief petty officer and occurs during the final phase of an intense, six- to eight-week training period for selectees. Usually secluded, the ceremony was held to recognize and share chief petty officer and Navy traditions with the staff and students. (Photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist L.A. Shively)

“In the United States Navy, the title of chief petty officer carries with it responsibilities and privileges no other armed force in the world grants enlisted personnel,” said Master Chief Hospital Corpsman Shanon Best, NMTSC command master chief.

“What we see in our young Sailors today is a tradition of devotion and dedication the first chiefs established with their sacrifices and valor,” Best said. “At this command we have over 100 chief petty officers representing seven

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different ratings, and as varied as these careers have been, each of them has something in common: a bond with one another and thousands of chief petty officers that few people can understand."



Front from left: Chief Petty Officers Edgar Nunez, Wade Martinson (at rear, from left) Leslie Giuy and Ashley Kelly carry a coffin containing the white hats of first class petty officers from Navy Medicine Training Support Center promoted to chief petty officer in 2013 . The white hat burial ceremony signifies transition from first class petty officer to chief petty officer and occurs during the final phase of an intense, six- to eight-week training period for selectees. Usually secluded, the ceremony was held to recognize and share chief petty officer and Navy traditions with staff and students. This was the third white hat burial ceremony NMTSC chief petty officers conducted on board Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston and was done in commemoration of the 121st Chief Petty Officer birthday. (Photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist L.A. Shively)

Best then described a typical day in the life of a chief seeking to guide Sailors while accomplishing the mission. The sounds of outlandish seas stories infused with the aroma of a freshly-brewed and strong "cup of joe" fills the air, Best said, setting the scene on entering a typical Chiefs Mess. Here groups of khaki-clad old salts are engaged in passionate and, at times heated discussions revolving around deck plate leadership – sorting out how to resolve a situation or answer a question.

"How many have wondered, 'Where did all of those supplies come from and so quickly?'" Best asked the gathering of approximately 200 people. Equipment repairs, Sailors' occasional infractions and guidance for junior officers, among other circumstances leading to mission success, are all worked out in the Mess, the command master chief explained.

"It's a way of life and something bigger than oneself," he said.

During the formal ceremony, honors were rendered, a bugler played Taps, and the flag draping the coffin was folded and presented to Best. Four chief petty officers acting as pall bearers carried then lowered the coffin into the ground next to the "grave site" from two previous year's ceremonies, just outside the Navy corpsman student barracks. Each of the chief petty officers promoted in 2013 shoveled dirt over the coffin.



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